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ABSTRACT

This performance guide is designed for teachers to use with students before and after a performance of "The Nightingale," a dance-theater performance conceived and choreographed by Dana Tai Soon Burgess, written and directed by Mary Hall Surface, and adapted from the story by Hans Christian Andersen. The guide, called a "Cuesheet," offers four Reproducible Activity Pages for students, as well as learning activities and information for teachers to share with young people before and after attending the performance. Materials for teachers address Using the Reproducible Activity Pages, Theater Conventions, and Problems To Solve (appreciating creative solutions that playmakers invent to solve theatrical problems). Reproducible Activity Pages include a Story Map (illustrating what happens in the play), Dancing a Story (a page of representative dance styles which may be similar to styles of movement found in the performance of "The Nightingale"), Designing Nightingales (familiarizing students with the job of the costume designer and encouraging them to think creatively), and Going to the Theater (familiarizing students with theater behavior). (SR)

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"The Nightingale": A Dance-Theater Performance Conceived & Choreographed by Dana Tai Soon Burgess. Cue Sheet for Teachers.

by Suzanne Pratt

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Cue sheet FOR TEACHERS

Welcome to *Cuesheet*, a performance guide published by the Education Department of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C. This *Cuesheet* is designed for teachers to use with students before and after attending a performance of *The Nightingale*.

What's in Cuesheet?

FOR TEACHERS
Activities and information to share with young people before and after the performance:

Using the Reproducible Activity Pages, page 2

Theater Conventions, page 6

Problems to Solve, page 7

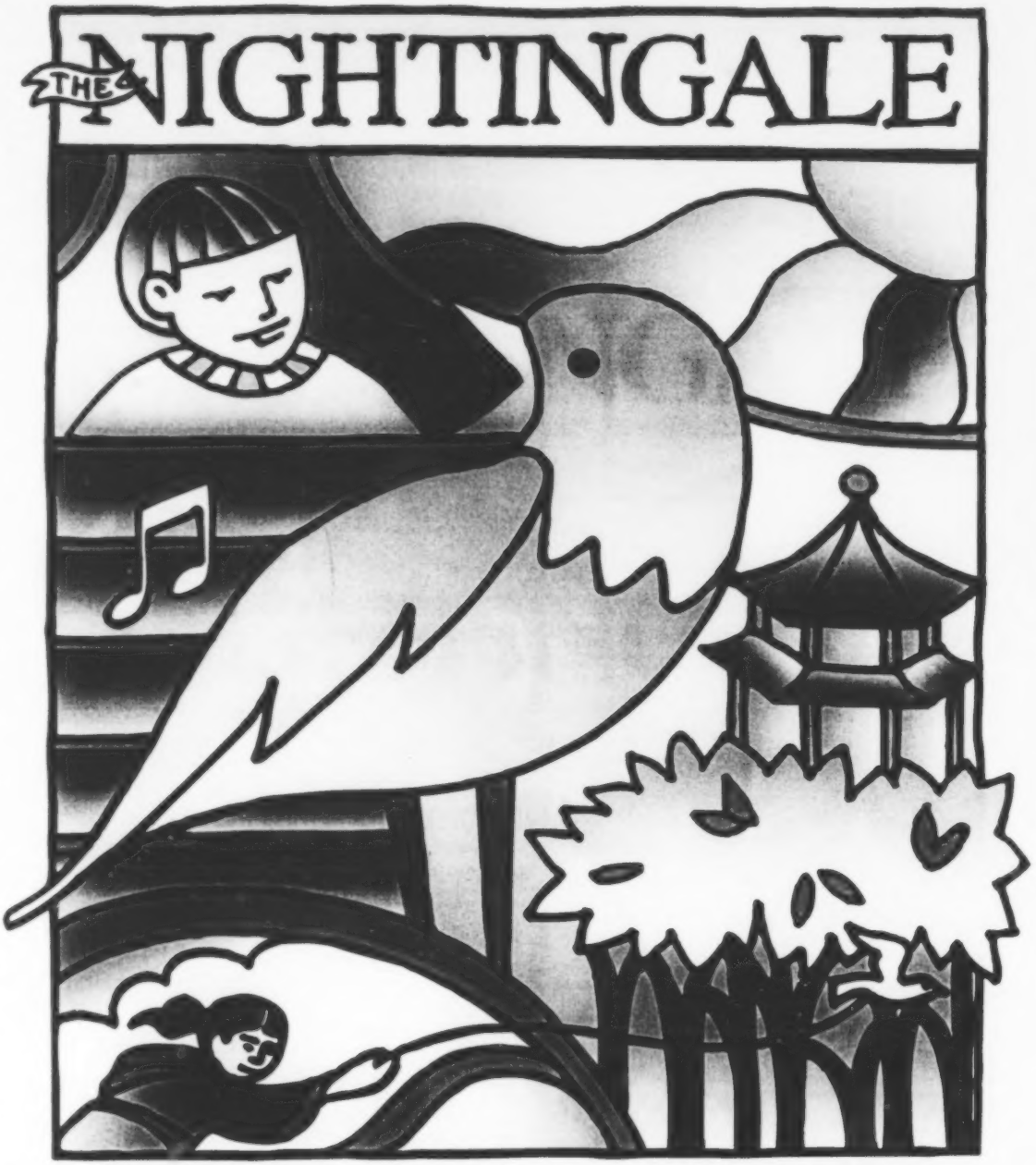
FOR STUDENTS
Four Reproducible Activity Pages:

The Nightingale Story Map, page 3

Dancing a Story, page 4

Designing Nightingales, page 5

Going to the Theater, page 8



A Dance-Theater Performance Conceived & Choreographed by Dana Tai Soon Burgess
Written and Directed by Mary Hall Surface • Music by David Maddox
Adapted from the story by Hans Christian Andersen

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Using the Reproducible Activity Pages

Preparing Students for *The Nightingale*

This page is designed to help teachers give students background information about real nightingales. There is also information about how to use reproducible pages 3, 4, 5, and 8. Pick and choose the questions and activities that best suit your purposes and time constraints. On the following pages, quotation marks are used in the activities to indicate one way to give information and directions to young people. Feel free to paraphrase the information.

The Nightingale Story Map

On **page 3** is a reproducible story map of *The Nightingale*. A story map illustrates what happens in the play. As you read the text, have the students follow the map:

"Follow the pictures as I read the story. Use your imaginations to think about how the actors will create the action in this play."

Dancing a Story

This production of *The Nightingale* is called "A Dance-Theater Performance" because much of the story is told through music, dance, and movement. There is only one character, the servant, who speaks.

Page 4 is a reproducible page of representative dance styles which may be similar to styles of movement found in the performance of *The Nightingale*. Explain the importance of dance and movement in *The Nightingale*, and have students examine these pictures before the performance.

Ask students,

"Has anyone ever been to a dance performance? Has anyone seen dancers who look like any of these pictures? When we go to *The Nightingale*, let's see if the dancers in the play remind us of any of these pictures."

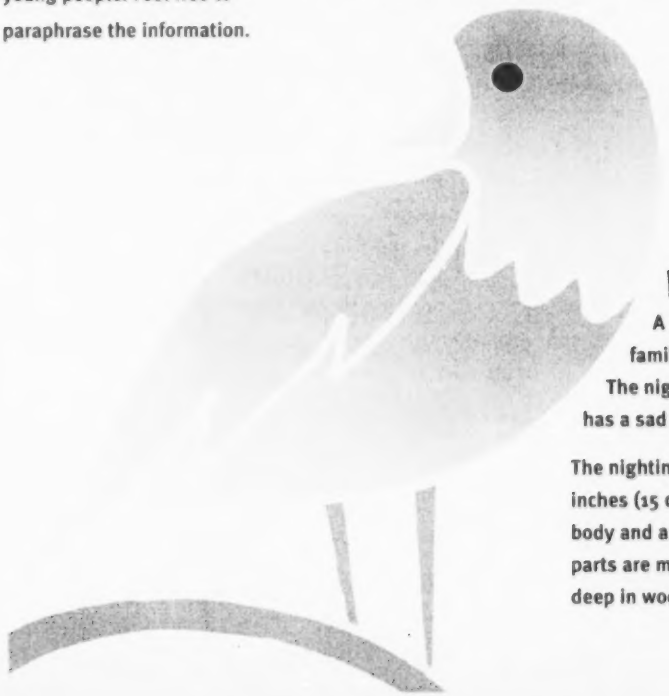
After the performance, review these pictures and identify which pictures resemble the movements of characters and moments in the play.

Designing Nightingales

This activity will familiarize students with the job of a costume designer and encourage them to think creatively. Before the performance, photocopy and distribute **page 5.** Encourage students to imagine and draw one costume for the performer playing the real nightingale and another for the performer playing the mechanical bird. Discuss with students the difficulties of making a person look like a bird. After the performance, have students compare the performers' costumes to their drawings.

Going To The Theater

Page 8 will familiarize students with theater behavior. You may wish to photocopy and review its contents with your students, and send it home for students to share with their families.



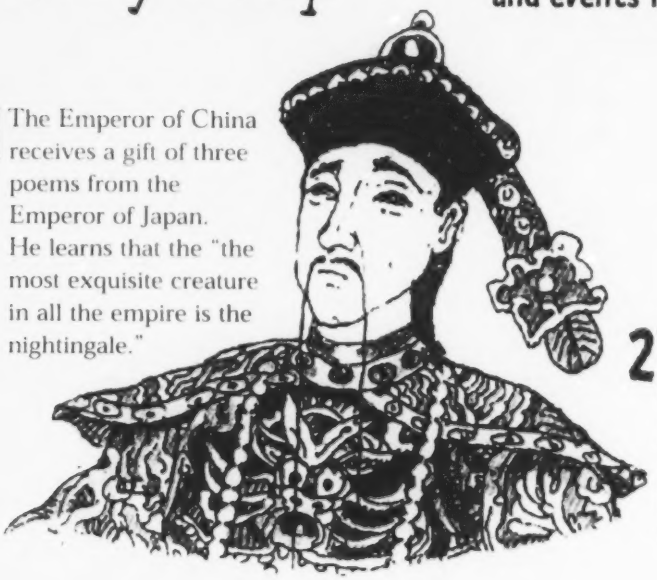
What Is a Nightingale?

A nightingale is a small bird of the thrush family that lives in western and central Europe. The nightingale is famed for its beautiful voice, which has a sad quality.

The nightingale is plain in appearance: it is about six inches (15 centimeters) long with a russet-brown upper body and a reddish rump and tail. The breast and under parts are mostly white. This shy bird is most at home deep in woods and hedges, especially along streams.

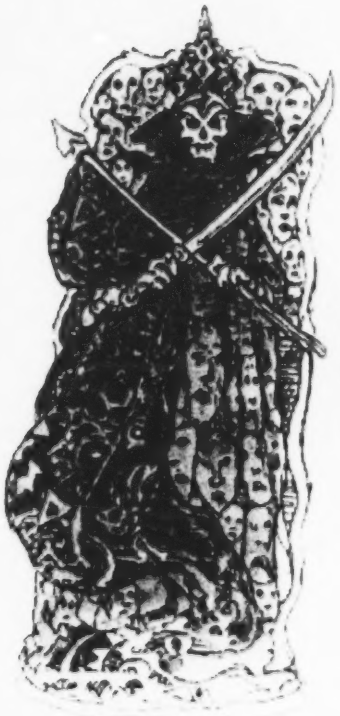
The Nightingale Story Map

Follow this story map to learn about characters and events in the play.

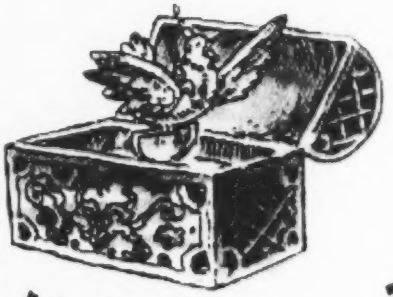


1 The Emperor of China receives a gift of three poems from the Emperor of Japan. He learns that the "the most exquisite creature in all the empire is the nightingale."

2 The Emperor sends his Courtiers to locate this "exquisite creature." A servant helps find the nightingale and brings the bird to the palace.



5 The mechanical bird breaks and the Emperor becomes sad and sick.



4 Another gift, a mechanical nightingale decorated with jewels, arrives from Japan. The Emperor prefers the mechanical bird. The real nightingale sadly returns to the forest.

3 The Emperor loves the nightingale's song. The little bird agrees to stay at the palace.

Will the real nightingale return to the Emperor? Find out what happens when you attend the play!

4

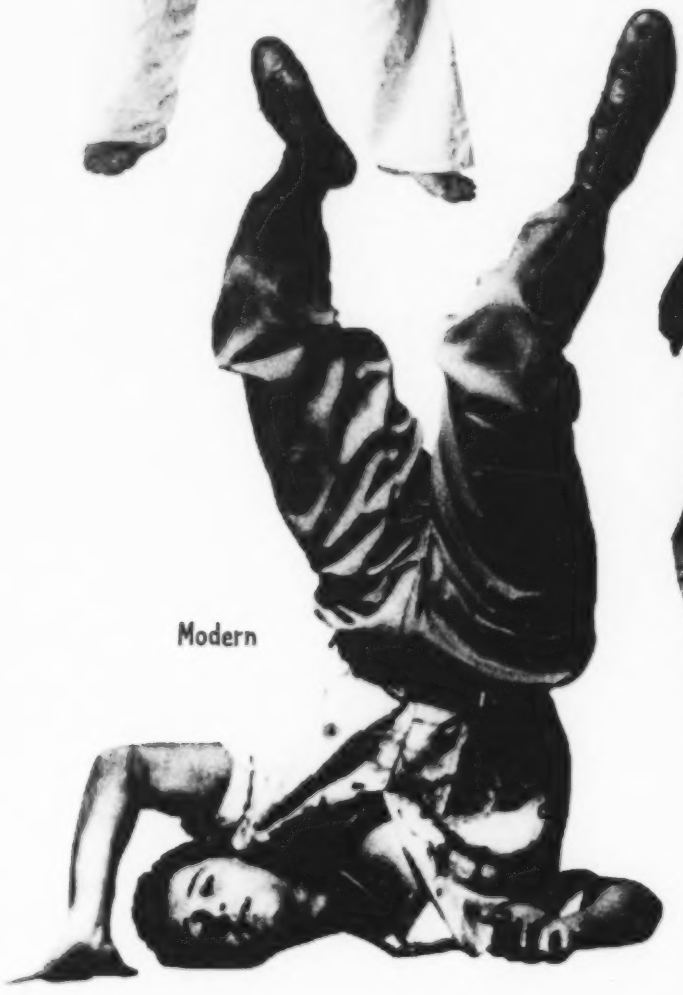
Reproducible Activity Page

Dancing a story

In The Nightingale, performers tell a lot of the story with movement and dance. Here are some pictures of different kinds of dancers and dances. When you go to the play, see if the dances remind you of any of these pictures.

Martial arts

Classical



Modern

Japanese

WOMEN ANDREW ASNES IN COMPANY B. PAUL TAYLOR DANCE COMPANY. PHOTO BY JACK MITCHELL. ALL OTHERS PHOTOS SC

Designing Nightingales

A play's costume designer imagines and draws costumes for actors playing characters. Pretend that you are The Nightingale's costume designer.

Design a costume for the actor playing the real nightingale.

Design a costume for the actor playing the mechanical jeweled nightingale.

When you go to the play, see if The Nightingale's costume designer had any of the same ideas!

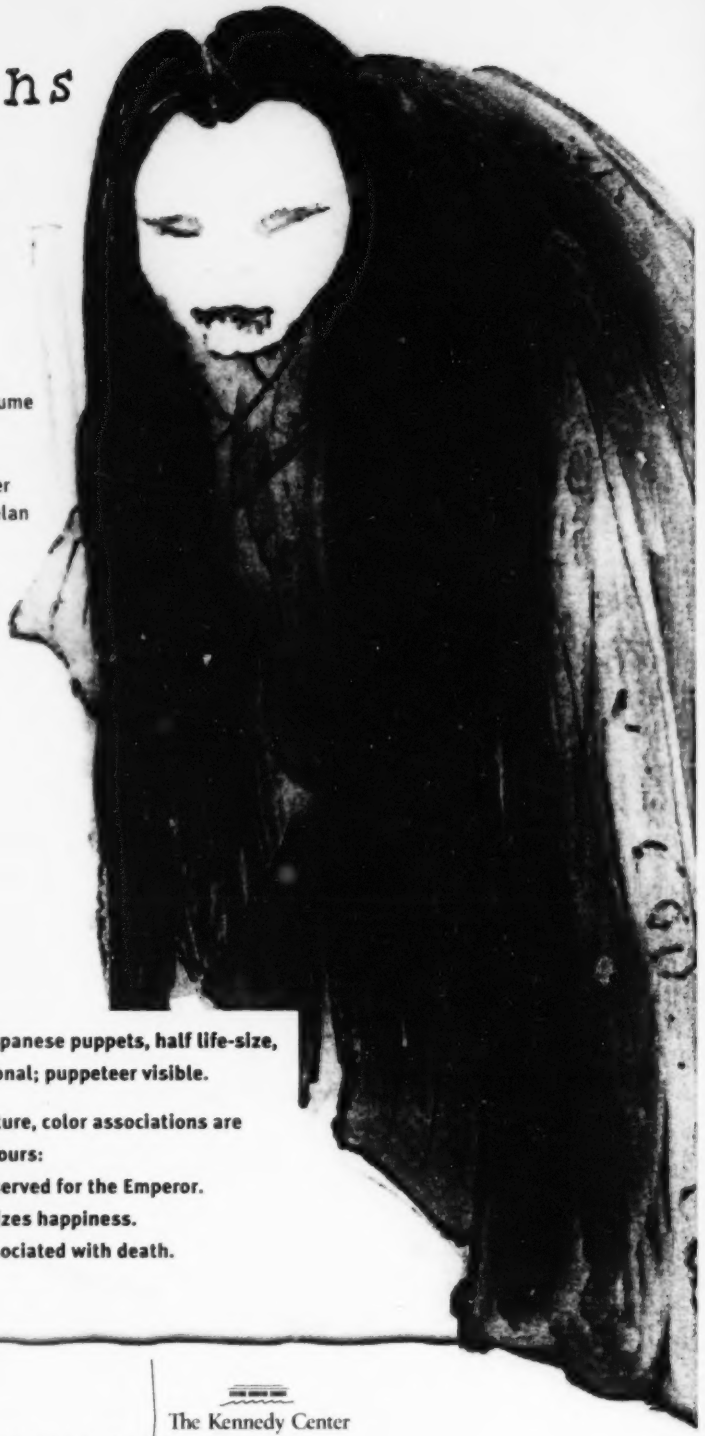
6

Theater Conventions

Before the Performance

Audiences and performers must agree to pretend that the play's action is real and is happening for the first time. This agreement is often maintained through the use of theatrical conventions (practices accepted as a part of playmaking). In *The Nightingale*, watch for these theater conventions:

- Changes in time or place are made by changes in lighting: direction, color, and/or intensity.
- Both the real and the mechanical nightingales are played by dancers. Movement symbolizes their songs.
- In Asian tradition, actors dressed in black are assumed to be invisible. When they hold branches, the audience understands that those actors are the forest; when they hold sticks with long ribbons attached, they are a river. A mobile of teardrops suggests rain.
- The character "Death" wears a mask in the style of a **Bunraku** puppet. (Teachers may request that the actors acquaint younger students with this costume/prop piece before the performance to minimize children's fears when the character appears in the play.)
- Performers play multiple roles.



Death mask costume sketch by *The Nightingale's* Costume Designer Jane Schloss Phelan

Bunraku — Japanese puppets, half life-size, three-dimensional; puppeteer visible.

In Chinese culture, color associations are different from ours:
1) Yellow is reserved for the Emperor.
2) Red symbolizes happiness.
3) White is associated with death.

Resources for Teachers

Andersen, Hans Christian. *The Nightingale*, illustrated by Lisbeth Zwerger. Natick, MA: Picture Book Studio, 1984.

Andersen, Hans Christian. *The Nightingale* (Faerie Tale Theatre Videorecording). Farmington Hills, MI: CBS/Fox Video, 1983.

Belville, Cheryl Walsh. *Theater Magic: Behind the Scenes at a Children's Theater.* Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, 1986. A children's theater prepares for performances of *The Nightingale.*

Heinig, Ruth B. *Improvisation with Favorite Tales: Integrating Drama into the Reading/Writing Classroom.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1992. This book has a chapter devoted to drama activities based on Andersen's *The Nightingale.*

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Problems to Solve

Before the Performance

Good audience members appreciate creative solutions that playmakers invent to solve theatrical problems. The following learning activity provides students with opportunities to consider solutions to theatrical problems.

Tell students:

"People who put on plays have to be creative problem-solvers. Here are some problems that had to be solved for *The Nightingale*. How would you solve them? You may use music, lights, sound effects, voices, costumes, scenery, and objects (props). Be careful. Your solutions must work on stage."

(You might want to record students' responses on chart paper for comparison after the performance.)

Problem 1: Travelers journey from the palace to a forest. How can actors show that they have traveled a long way on a small stage?

Problem 2: How can an actor pretend to be a real nightingale? a mechanical nightingale?

Problem 3: In one scene there is a moment where time stands still. How can you make this clear to an audience?

After the Performance

Ask students:

"Remember the problems we tried to solve before we went to see *The Nightingale?* (Restate problems 1–3 above.) We shared our solutions before we went to see the play. Now let's talk about how the playmakers solved each of the problems. How did our solutions compare with theirs?"

Post the students' solutions and discuss the similarities and differences between theirs and those of the playmakers.

Jane Schloss Phelan's costume sketch for real nightingale

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Going to the Theater

Welcome to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

Before the Performance

An **usher** will meet your class at the entrance to the theater and direct you to your seats. **Bathrooms** are located outside the theater. It is a good idea to use them before the performance. If you must go to the bathroom during the performance, be sure you leave and return quietly. The lights will dim or go out when the performance is about to begin. At this time the audience becomes **quiet.**

During the Performance

The performance has been created just for you, the audience. Everyone on stage speaks, moves, or sings for you. The audience **listens and watches** carefully. Talking to friends disturbs the performers and other members of the audience. Performers like it when you **laugh** when something is funny. They also like to hear you **clap** at the end of a performance when they **bow.**

After the Performance

After the bows (also called the **curtain call**), the audience **stays seated** until the lights in the theater **(house lights)** come on. Follow the usher's **directions** for leaving the theater.